United Nations A/C.1/59/PV.23

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

First Committee
23rd meeting
Friday, 5 November 2004, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. De Alba ..... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning, we will take action on draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, under cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery". In that connection, it is my understanding that draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.1 and A/C.1/59/L.13 have been withdrawn.

I call first on the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The following delegations have become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Djibouti, Latvia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall call now upon representatives wishing to make general remarks on this cluster.

Mr. Luaces (United States of America): The United States delegation wishes first to confirm for the record our request that action on draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.1, introduced by our delegation, be deferred indefinitely. It is essentially being withdrawn from consideration by the Committee.

With regard to the general subject, obviously, I think that members of the Committee who have been very active on this subject this year should feel very proud of the work we are about to embark upon today. Even those documents, which seem likely at this point to be adopted by consensus, but which do not deal directly with revitalization, do in fact reflect what has been our common goal over the past two years since this subject was first introduced within the Committee, which is to try to improve communication among delegations that normally do not discuss these issues to try to facilitate a means whereby — by "clearing the decks" and improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Committee — we might be able to dedicate more time to the discussion of substantive issues.

There were some remarks that we were not able to make last year because of the way the last day of the session was finished, and we would be remiss, Mr. Chairman, if we did not take note of your leadership and that of your delegation, and of the tremendous support from the Secretariat staff, which was able to churn out all these documents in various iterations with what, in our system, pretty much passes for what I might call sonic speed. It is our hope that when delegations and Governments look back on the activities of the First Committee this session they will recognize not only how much we have facilitated our Governments' and our delegations' consideration of the issues that come before us in this Committee, but also the contribution that we shall be making through these various documents to the broader efforts by the

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Secretary-General and by the President of the General Assembly to revitalize the General Assembly and thereby make the United Nations a yet more vital and effective international organization.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): I would like to make a few remarks concerning cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery". Japan attaches great importance to the reform and revitalization of the First Committee in the light of the significant responsibility of this body in the field of disarmament, and we welcome with great appreciation the efforts made by the United States and the Non-Aligned Movement, the authors of draft resolution A/C.1/59.L.60, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee".

During the course of the consultations, we participated vigorously in the discussion, together with other members, including States of the European Union. We can say that the draft resolution is the fruit of the joint efforts of all the members of the First Committee.

Japan believes that each item proposed in the draft resolution — including the biennialization or triennialization of agenda items, more interactive debates, the drafting of draft resolutions in a concise and action-oriented manner and the holding of informal consultations by sponsors of draft resolutions both before and during Committee meetings — is so important that all of them must be considered seriously in the preparation of the draft resolution for next year.

Japan also appreciates the interactive debates held during our informal meetings on very important issues such as the implementation of resolutions. Under that item we particularly valued the contribution made by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Abe. We look forward to another interesting session next year.

Concerning financial aspects, we note that the establishment of panels or groups of governmental experts is authorized by several draft resolutions, such as those on missiles, verification and small arms and light weapons. I would like to emphasize that efforts should be made to utilize existing resources as far as possible when establishing new groups and to avoid the uncontrolled expansion of the United Nations budget.

That is one of the reasons why, in the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons, a group of governmental experts on brokering will be established only after the conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on marking and tracing in order to avoid the overlapping of the two groups.

Japan also appreciates the efforts of Ambassador De Alba, Chairman of the First Committee, to formulate a new programme of work and timetable for the First Committee. Japan hopes that next year's session of the First Committee will be conducted in an effective manner under the new programme of work and timetable. All participants can be proud of the fact that the First Committee is at the forefront of United Nations reform.

Mr. Zain (Malaysia): I am taking the floor on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I should like to refer to the statement just delivered by the representative of the United States concerning the withdrawal of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.1. Malaysia, on behalf of NAM, had presented to the Committee draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.13, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee", on 19 October 2004. Likewise, the United States delegation had submitted draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.1 of the same title. Subsequently, NAM, together with the European Union, the United States and other interested delegations, engaged in a series of open-ended informal consultations to work on a draft text on the question of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. As a result of those consultations, we have agreed on a consolidated draft resolution that encapsulates the vital elements of draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.1 and L.13, as well as the concerns expressed by other delegations.

I am pleased to inform the Committee that after consultations we held, particularly over the past three weeks, a new text has been formulated and will soon be presented by the representative of Indonesia. In that connection, Malaysia, on behalf of NAM, as the sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.13, invoking rule 122 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, wishes to withdraw the draft resolution, entitled: "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee".

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Indonesia to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, entitled

"Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee", under agenda item 65 (k). In the spirit of General Assembly resolution 58/41 and taking into account resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, my delegation believes that the measures outlined in the draft resolution could contribute to the improvement of the functioning and the role of the First Committee. Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60 is the outcome of intensive consultations, which were conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. As a result, it takes on board a number of proposals contained in draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.1 and L.13 and other proposals submitted by many delegations during the informal consultations.

As the facilitator of the draft resolution, let me express my delegation's sincere thanks and appreciation to the representatives of countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the European Union, to the United States and to all other delegations that participated in the consultations for their flexibility, which facilitated the achievement of this consolidated draft resolution. It is my sincere hope that the draft resolution will enjoy consensus.

Let me take this opportunity also to reply to a question raised in one of the informal consultations by the representative of Sierra Leone on the status of draft resolutions A/C.1/59/L.1 and L.13, which have been withdrawn. I can happily say that the consensual marriage between those two draft resolutions has now taken place.

Before we take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, I wish to make two technical corrections to paragraph 6. The word "presented" should be replaced by the word "present" and the words "in achieving the objective" should be replaced by the words "to the achievement of the objective". Paragraph 6 should thus read as follows:

> "Encourages all Member States, in particular those that present any draft resolution, to follow up on the agreed resolution in order to contribute to the achievement of the objective of such resolution".

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee", as orally corrected by the representative of Indonesia.

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee", as orally corrected by the representative of Indonesia. The draft resolution was introduced by the representative of Indonesia at the Committee's 23rd meeting, held on 5 November 2004. The sponsors of the draft resolution are listed in documents A/C.1/59/L.60 and A/C.1/59/INF/2/Add.8. In addition, the delegations whose names I read out earlier have also become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60 have expressed the wish that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote. May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft resolution, as orally corrected?

> *Draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, as orally corrected, was adopted.*

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the sponsors of the draft resolution on having succeeded in merging the two previous texts.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba has always been in favour of improving the working methods of all United Nations bodies, with the proviso that the exercise must not infringe on the right of Member States to promote and uphold their legitimate interests. On that basis, my delegation has supported draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, which was the outgrowth of intensive negotiation under the skilful and transparent leadership of the delegation of Indonesia and with the active involvement of member States.

The draft resolution contains compromise language that made adoption without a vote possible. That is true, for instance, of paragraph 8, which does not establish any new procedures or depart from rule 154 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In our view, information provided on the detailed budgeting of the costs entailed in resolutions recommended by the Committee must not stand in the way of the adoption of new legislative mandates. In

that connection, we reaffirm the validity of resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 and later resolutions relevant to this issue. Any subsequent consideration of the established practice under rules 153 and 154 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly would have to occur in the Fifth Committee, which is charged with the consideration of administrative and budgetary issues.

With the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60, we are hopeful that at its next session the First Committee will focus on considering and vigorously moving forward on those substantive items that are priorities on its agenda. That will require the necessary political will of all member States.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded our consideration of draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items.

Other matters

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to the consideration of the proposed programme of work and timetable for the Committee's sixtieth session. The relevant document has been circulated in the Conference Room.

May I take it that it is the wish of the First Committee to adopt the proposed programme of work and timetable for the sixtieth session?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee will now proceed to the consider tion of the draft letter from the Chairman of the First Committee addressed to the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-ninth session.

That document, dated 5 November 2004, has been distributed in the room. In the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft letter.

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like at this point to make a brief statement concerning the preparation of reports. It is my understanding that the Committee considers it important to give particular attention to the preparation and follow-up of reports the Committee itself requests of the Secretariat. In that connection, we look forward to the recommendations of the Department for Disarmament Affairs on the basis of consultations held at the current session, in particular at the meeting during which we gave close attention to this issue. It is my hope that the Under-Secretary-General will make proposals in that connection for the Committee's future consideration. Again, the aim is to make better use reports and further facilitate their preparation.

I call on the representative of Armenia, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, to introduce the document on proposed modifications to the proposed strategic framework and to update the Committee on the consultations held this morning.

Ms. Aghajanian (Armenia): I am grateful for this opportunity to report to the Committee on the progress made by those delegations that took part in the consultations on proposed modifications to the proposed strategic framework. I take this opportunity to thank all delegations that were actively involved in the consultations and that expended time and effort to reach agreement on this document, which reflects the consensus position of those present at the consultations.

The document, entitled "Proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007", is before delegations. The proposed modifications have already been incorporated into the document. Also, a separate sheet has been distributed, which should replace the first page of subprogramme 3. That separate sheet contains the language acceptable to those that were present in the consultations. With that insertion, the document seems to be agreeable to the delegations that actively took part in the consultations. We are thus ready to present the outcome of the consultations to the Committee for approval.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the Vice-Chairperson on her efforts and on the outcome of the consultations.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the proposed modifications to the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (programme 3: disarmament) and to report to the General Assembly on the outcome of our consideration of the proposed plan?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): A number of representatives have requested the floor, and I shall call on them now.

Mr. Zain (Malaysia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). At the outset, NAM wishes to extend its congratulations and appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for the highly admirable manner in which you have steered the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. The smooth and efficient conduct of the work of the Committee is, indeed, testimony to your leadership and skill as well as to your ability to garner the full confidence and cooperation of all delegations, including the members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Of course, we never doubted your capacity or ability to do so most satisfactorily.

We also wish to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for building on the measures introduced by your predecessor, Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Committee. Undoubtedly, this is a continuous process, and NAM has taken and will continue to take a supportive and constructive attitude towards any effort aimed at achieving that common objective of ours. The innovative and creative measures that you have introduced and implemented during the course of our deliberations over the past five weeks, which were useful and constructive, have significantly contributed to the positive outcome of our work at this session.

In that connection, NAM hopes that those new measures will be retained and further refined in future sessions, in the interest of the Committee. It has become obvious that the role and product of the First Committee have gained greater significance in recent years. That has become more apparent owing to the inability of other parts of the multilateral disarmament machinery to generate substantive results this year. While we do not wish to paint a bleak picture, the reality is that 2004 has been a disappointing year in the field of multilateral disarmament efforts.

Nevertheless, we share the positive outlook for the successful outcome of the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention to be held in Nairobi at the end of this month and the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to be held next month. We look forward also to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in May 2005, where we believe all the States parties should work together to advance our common goals.

It is our hope that those meetings will provide the much-needed impetus necessary to move the global disarmament agenda forward and to fashion a much safer and more peaceful world. You may rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of the positive and constructive engagement of the Non-Aligned Movement in all those meetings.

In that same spirit, the Non-Aligned Movement, as in previous years, approached this session in a constructive frame of mind. We introduced seven draft resolutions for consideration by the Committee; in that connection, I will recall that we withdrew draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.13. We engaged interested delegations in numerous informal consultation on the texts and, where possible, took into consideration the concerns raised. We continue to find this approach useful in enriching the discussion on the substance of texts.

As at previous sessions, our draft resolutions continued to receive overwhelming support by States members of the Committee. The Non-Aligned Movement would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation and gratitude to all the delegations that supported those draft resolutions. Although sponsored by the Movement, those draft resolutions, along with the others adopted by the Committee, in the final analysis, fall under the ownership of the General Assembly, notwithstanding our national, regional or group interests. As such, we are glad to have had the opportunity to exchange views on the important question of the implementation of and follow-up to the resolutions of the First Committee that the Chairman instituted during our interactive discussion a few weeks ago. We certainly benefited from it, and we look forward to further ideas and proposals that the Chairman and the Secretariat may produce for our consideration in due course.

Recognizing the importance of constantly moving forward and evolving to meet current and future challenges, the Non-Aligned Movement, together with the European Union, the United States and other interested delegations, has been actively engaged in a series of open-ended informal consultations to collectively formulate measures to improve the work of the Committee. Thus, we believe that the adoption by the Committee today of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60 signifies another important milestone in our efforts to improve the work of the Committee and the General

Assembly as a whole, as envisaged in resolutions 58/126 and 58/316.

The Committee has completed consideration of all 16 agenda items allocated to it at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The Committee has also succeeded in adopting three draft decisions and 48 draft resolutions, as compared to seven and 46, respectively, at the previous session. We achieved that in the course of 23 meetings, although our maximum allocation was 26 meetings over a period of five weeks. Those are certainly signs of good achievement.

In that connection, congratulations are due to you, Mr. Chairman, to the other members of the Bureau, to all delegations and groupings and to the Secretariat for all the hard work and for the spirit of cooperation that has prevailed throughout the past five weeks. We should like also to extend our appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who made every effort to ensure smooth deliberations in the Committee.

Finally, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms and reiterates its commitment to promoting international peace and security primarily through disarmament measures. The Non-Aligned Movement strongly reaffirms its belief that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations remain the only sustainable way to address disarmament and international security issues.

Mr. Caughley (New Zealand): I am very pleased, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, to have this opportunity to thank you warmly, Mr. Chairman, for the manner in which you have presided over the work of the Committee throughout our session. As we saw last year as well, skilful chairing of meetings such as these greatly helps set the tone for our work. This is all the more important in circumstances where a central aspect of that work is the revitalization of the way in which we organize and conduct ourselves. Through your adept, patient and altogether impressive efforts, Sir, you have helped us firmly along that path. As the Committee becomes more businesslike, so, too, it increases its sense of purpose. The greater our sense of purpose, the greater our effectiveness in confronting so many issues which are crucial to international security.

In that regard, we welcome the level of cooperation apparent in the Committee, as noted by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, especially in respect of draft resolution A/C.1/59/L.60.

In conclusion, we are very grateful to you, Sir, for the experience, vitality and good judgement that you have shown throughout the Committee's work this year, to your hard-working Bureau and to all who support us, including notably, Under-Secretary-General Abe.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, we wholeheartedly congratulate you on having successfully guided our work. It was a challenge to build on what previous Chairmen have done, and I believe you successfully managed to do that. It was a privilege to have been able to nominate a candidate of your calibre and capabilities, and we are very pleased with the way you have performed. Clearly, Sir, the Committee would not have been so successful had you not enjoyed the cooperation of all delegations and the support of the Secretariat, particularly that of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Abe, and his staff.

On a number of the draft resolutions that were before us, the desired consensus could not be reached because proposed amendments were rejected. Such differences of opinion are natural in a forum of 191 States where views on how to achieve disarmament can vary from one country or region to the next. But we are certain that all delegations represented here are doing their utmost to attain the common goal of general and complete disarmament and thus to achieve lasting peace everywhere in the world.

In conclusion, I should like to express our appreciation for the support delegations received from the interpreters, translators, editors, documents officers and other members of the Secretariat.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish once again to express my appreciation to the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for having endorsed my candidacy for the chairmanship.

I wish now to offer some brief thoughts, and particularly to say some words of thanks.

Speaking without notes and thus risking errors and oversights, I should like simply to urge members to continue adapting our working methods to allow for better communication among us. In the course of informal consultations I have stressed that we must come to the United Nations in the spirit of working together to find options that will enable us to move forward. Sharing information on our respective positions, on the progress we have made and on the difficulties we have encountered is important. But it is not enough.

We must come here ready to make common commitments to attain common goals. None of us can succeed through individual or national action. The challenges are the same for large countries and small countries; they are global in nature. In matters of disarmament and international security, I think that has been clearly shown.

I am therefore satisfied at the outcome of this session. I think that, probably not enough but to some degree, the Committee has made progress on its agenda. I think we will have to work even harder to continue making progress. We face major substantive challenges. I think that as a result of adapting the Committee's working methods, we now have not just the opportunity but the obligation to focus more on substantive issues. The process of the revitalization of the General Assembly should thus be viewed not as a goal in itself but as a tool for attaining better substantive results.

I especially thank, first and foremost, every member of the Bureau. I think few Chairmen — at least very few of those that I have known — could feel so satisfied and so proud of the support and understanding consistently demonstrated within the Bureau. I had three Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur of outstanding quality. Each of them, on various occasions, contributed suggestions and recommendations that were very useful to me. Let me repeat that I do not believe that the Committee could have accomplished much if at this session the Bureau had not had representatives of such high quality: the representatives of Armenia, Israel, Sierra Leone and Yemen.

The support I received from the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and his Department was also extraordinary. It was no mere mechanical support. The support required by the Chairman represented a great challenge for the Office of Under-Secretary-General Abe. They had to respond when they were called upon to do so, often with very little warning and very little guidance, but they were able to do the job. I think that is how both Secretariat and Government officials ought to work.

The support of our Secretary, Ms. Cheryl Stoute, and her entire staff was also essential. More than once, I put our team in a difficult spot, and I apologize to all staff for the haste with which things sometimes had to be done and for the lack of formality at other times. But I think the Secretariat should be able to react to new scenarios and new working methods. Cheryl and all her staff were able to do that; I think the Committee has been in very good hands.

We had outstanding logistical support both with respect to interpretation and, thanks to my friend José Pedro, in the area of documentation.

This has been a collective effort. But I think it was also an individual effort on the part of each representative. Substantive results can be achieved only to the extent that each of us, as Committee members, comes to these annual gatherings open to dialogue, to negotiation, to yielding a little and to trying to understand something of the other's point of view. Together, we can achieve results that I hope will be increasingly substantive.

I do not want to take any more time. From the beginning, I proposed that we be brief in our statements. I have noted on a number of occasions that I myself have not been brief. I again ask pardon for that; I think achieving that brevity is going to be hard for me. I hope that when it is my turn to sit here as a member, I will be able to limit myself to those famous five minutes.

There being no further matters for discussion, I declare closed this stage of the work of the First Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.